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## The Pemba Island race of the African Goshawk *Accipiter tachiro*

by C. W. Benson & Hugh F. I. Elliott

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In a paper on the birds of Zanzibar and Pemba, Vaughan (1929: 604) remarked on differences between four specimens of *A. tachiro* collected by him on Pemba, presented by him to the British Museum (Natural History) and now at Tring, and those assigned to the race *A. t. sparsimfasciatus*, which represents the species on the East African mainland, at its nearest point only 30 miles from the island. Apart from colour, Vaughan also drew attention to their small size. He differentiated them from a specimen taken in Zanzibar, which he considered nearest to Rhodesian specimens attributed to *sparsimfasciatus*, in which however he noted considerable individual variation. He concluded that the material from Pemba, consisting of an adult ♂, and adult ♀ and two birds which he diagnosed as males, though they are unsexed on the labels, was perhaps hardly sufficient to justify the description of a new race.

Another specimen of this goshawk from Pemba has been acquired recently by the British Museum (Natural History). It was at one time in the collection of Captain Vivian Hewitt, and is marked "E. Mus. J. Backhouse. ♂. Hawk from Pemba Island, E. African coast. Received Nov. 1902 (Burt)". This specimen apart (in fact it closely resembles the three Pemba males discussed by Vaughan), there are a number of reasons for thinking that the status of the Pemba goshawk should be clarified. Wattel (1973: 66) has drawn attention to its smaller size than *sparsimfasciatus* on the adjacent mainland, and prior to this Irwin & Benson (1966: 2) had pointed out its characters in respect of both size and colouration; in these characters, in fact, it differs at least as much as races which have long been recognised, not to mention the recently described *A. t. croizati* from S.W. Ethiopia, distinguished from *unduliventer* of the rest of that country by Desfayes (1974). It therefore gives a misleading impression, as White (1965: 46) does, to include not only Zanzibar but also Pemba in the range of *sparsimfasciatus*. The distinctiveness of the Pemba goshawk introduces another piece into the somewhat complex jigsaw of the island's avifauna, as analysed by Moreau (1966: 353). In general the species shows a marked preference for richer types of woodland or evergreen forest. Thus it seems to be an example, of which as Moreau says there are few in Pemba, of a "forest bird, a category that might be expected to be

particularly sedentary", as this species surely is. It is interesting that, as such, it should have diverged on an island which should properly be classified as "oceanic" (being unconnected with the continental shelf) in a manner that is reminiscent of some of the more westerly populations (especially *lopezi* of Fernando Poo), namely the richer colour of the underparts and smaller size.

White (*loc. cit.*) follows Chapin (1932: 628), and for the same reasons, in assigning the otherwise rather similar middle-sized goshawks with a relatively short middle toe and tarsus (formerly recognised by their allocation to a separate genus "*Astur*"), which range over well-wooded areas of Africa south of the Sahara, to two species—*tousсенелии* and *tachiro*. The "link" form might appear (misleadingly) to be *macroclides* of Sierra Leone to western Cameroun, since it was assigned by Sclater (1924: 70) to *tachiro*, not *tousсенелии*, which he nevertheless kept as species apart. However, Bannerman (1930: 288), Peters (1931: 209), Brown & Amadon (1968: 492) and Wattel (1973: 65) have all recognised only the one species. The reason why Chapin & White considered there were two was because both occurred in the Uelle area, in north-eastern Zaire, without evidence of intergradation. Nevertheless Wattel (1973: 71) has shown that although in this area the ranges of *canescens* (in the *tousсенелии* group) and *sparsimfasciatus* (in the *tachiro* group) interdigitate, in no locality have they been found to be sympatric. Furthermore he records an intermediate specimen from Abimva, Uelle. We therefore follow Wattel and his predecessors in regarding *tachiro* and *tousсенелии* as conspecific.

We formally name the Pemba race of the African Goshawk:—

*Accipiter tachiro pembaensis*, subsp. nov.

*Description*: (1) Adult ♂ (plumage): nearest to *A. t. tachiro*, but thighs and barring of underparts pinkish-rather than sepia-brown in tone, a similar colour also suffusing the throat; axillaries merely with a few broken bars instead of being regularly and heavily barred; white mirrors on central tail-feathers obsolete, not clearly marked. At once distinguishable from *A. t. sparsimfasciatus*, in which barring of underparts is greyish brown, thighs in some specimens are almost white and the white mirrors in tail are well marked (as in *A. t. tachiro*).

(2) Adult ♀ (plumage): Brown of upperparts with a slight greyish tone, lacking in *A. t. tachiro* and *sparsimfasciatus*, which are indistinguishable from each other; underparts with a chestnut wash, especially on the thighs, more accentuated than in any specimen of these other two races, from the majority of which it is also distinguishable by extremely sparse and rufous brown rather than sepia barring; axillaries pale chestnut with barring almost obsolete instead of the white, heavily barred, which is usual in the two other races.

(3) Immature (plumage): unknown.

(4) Size: Relatively small. A comparative summary of wing-lengths in mm is as follows:—

	<i>A. t. pembaensis</i>	
4♂♂	190, 193, 194, 200	1♀ 224
	<i>A. t. sparsimfasciatus</i>	
10♂♂	204-227 (212.9)	17♀♀ 240-263 (252.5)
	<i>A. t. tachiro</i>	
17♂♂	202-216 (209.5)	7♀♀ 240-255 (245.1)

[Figures from Irwin & Benson, 1966: 2; for *sparsimfasciatus* from Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia northwards to Kenya and Uganda, for nominate

*tachiro* from South Africa. From Rhodesia, where Irwin & Benson found intergradation, they give 9 ♂♂ as 207-226 (212.6) and 3 ♀♀ 250, 252, 257 mm.]

*Distribution*: Confined to Pemba Island, off coast of Tanzania at 5° 20' S., 39° 40' E.

*Type*: Adult male, testes somewhat enlarged, Pemba Island, 14 September 1928, collector J. H. Vaughan; in the British Museum (Natural History), Tring, registered number 1929. 6. 27. 14.

*Measurements of type*: Wing 193, tail 156, tarsus 57, bill (from feathers) 23, middle toe and claw 36.5 mm.

*Material examined*: Material from the Tanzanian off-shore islands of Pemba, Zanzibar and Mafia is detailed in the Table. In addition, the following adults in Tring from the mainland were studied:—*sparsimfasciatus*, 8 ♂♂ 14 ♀♀; nominate *tachiro*, 15 ♂♂, 8 ♀♀. Thirty immature specimens in all, of these two races, were also available in Tring; likewise both adults and immatures of all the other races generally recognised.

Sex	Locality	Date	Wing	Tail	Tarsus	Bill (from feathers)	Middle toe and claw	Collector; Other remarks
<i>A. t. pembaensis</i>								
♂	Pemba	14.9.28	193	156	57	23	36.5	J. H. Vaughan. Type of <i>pembaensis</i>
[♂]	Pemba	3.10.22	190	146	62	23.5	41	J. H. Vaughan
[♂]	Pemba	26.7.28	194	152	57	23	37	J. H. Vaughan
♂	Pemba	?	200	154	58	22	40	Collector and date of collection not known. Formerly in Hewitt collection.
♀	Pemba	8.9.28	224	178	62	26	45	J. H. Vaughan
<i>A. t. sparsimfasciatus</i>								
♂	Zanzibar	3.11.26	214	171	61	26	44	J. H. Vaughan
♂	Zanzibar	8.10.36	214	174	61	24	49	J. Vincent
♀	Zanzibar	21.8.32	253	208	69	29	54	R. H. W. Pakenham. Immature.
♂(?)	Mafia	19.9.37	212	180	60	23	45	p.p. R. E. Moreau. Possibly mis-sexed, see text.

*N.B.* All adult except Zanzibar ♀

*Further remarks*: Vaughan (1929: 605) likened his male from Zanzibar (see Table) to specimens from Rhodesia (he was presumably referring to two adult males in Tring from Selinda, eastern Rhodesia, considered by Irwin & Benson, 1966: 2, to be *sparsimfasciatus*, even although they found some specimens in other museums from eastern Rhodesia to be intermediate with nominate *tachiro*). Actually, despite the fact the Zanzibar is the type-locality of *sparsimfasciatus*, Vaughan's specimen on the whole agrees best in colour with some males of nominate *tachiro*. On the other hand, the male collected by Vincent on Zanzibar is very similar to mainland specimens of *sparsimfasciatus*, and Vaughan's specimen must be considered as somewhat aberrant.

Irwin & Benson (*loc. cit.*) gave the colour-differences between the sexes (when adult) of nominate *tachiro* and *sparsimfasciatus*. These can be recapitulated (with slight amendment) as being normally as follows:—

(a) upperparts dark slate in ♂, dark brown in ♀.

(b) white mirrors on central tail-feathers well developed in ♂, rudimentary or absent in ♀.

(c) barring on underparts regular and well developed in ♂, in ♀ very variable but often reduced and more sepia in tone; flanks in ♀ also variable, but often white without any rufous tone.

The detailing of these differences is necessary in considering the Mafia specimen in the Table, which was recorded as a ♂ *sparsimfasciatus* by Moreau (1940: 69), without comment. In colour, however, it is a typical female, dark brown above, with sepia-brown, rather sparse, barring below. The possibility exists that it was mis-sexed (according to the label the sexual organs were described by the African collector as "unenlarged"). If it was mis-sexed and in reality a female, then the Mafia population, like that of Pemba, would seem to be very small in dimensions (see wing-lengths quoted above, and Table). Against this possibility, there is a very similar specimen from Tambarara, Mozambique, ca. 19° S., 34° E., collected by C. H. B. Grant on 9 May 1907, and sexed by him as a male. It only noticeably differs from the Mafia specimen in having the underparts more heavily barred. Its wing-length of a mere 204 mm strongly suggests that it was correctly sexed. This specimen was assigned by Irwin & Benson to *sparsimfasciatus* without any particular comment, but it's certainly aberrant. It can only be decided from further investigation in the field on Mafia whether Moreau's specimen is also aberrant or represents a distinct population characterised by small size and no doubt also small numbers.

As with adult females, it does not appear possible to distinguish between immature specimens of nominate *tachiro* and *sparsimfasciatus*. In either sex, both have dark brown upperparts and white underparts spotted dark brown, with relatively little individual variation. There is nothing distinctive about the immature from Zanzibar.

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## A catalogued specimen of *Coua delalandei* (Temminck) (Cuculidae) in Merseyside County Museums, Liverpool

by P. J. Morgan

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J. C. Greenway (1967) lists several specimens of extinct birds in the collections of Merseyside County Museums (ex City of Liverpool Museums). Details of these were taken from the Bulletin of Liverpool Museums but the *Catalogue of Birds in the Derby Museum* published in the same journal was not